



The Amateur in You, Part 2

What have you been pondering?



Your two-minute warning

You hear a loud knock at your door, ***Fire department...you have two minutes to leave your house!*** In the November 2019 issue of *Reader's Digest*, several homeowners recount hearing those very words during the devastation of the July 2018 fire that ravaged houses in a suburb of Redding, California, in which more than 38,000 were forced to evacuate their homes. If you had only two minutes to leave your home and property, what would you take with you? In most cases, you might not need to evacuate your home at all, but let's stop and consider a situation that might require you to vacate with little notice.

People and animals first

Your first concern is for the people in your household, and then your animals. Your animals can be domestic pets, service animals, or livestock. Plan a way for people and animals to escape quickly. Take into account age and disabilities, and how long it will take to evacuate those who might need assistance.

A grab-and-go bag is essential

Stored in a closet right by your front door is your grab-and-go bag, which contains all the personal and family items you had planned for an evacuation just like this, long ahead of time. You've stored away bandages, water, toilet paper, over-the-counter medicine, lighter, headlamp, batteries, clothing, ham radio, and other things you and your family need. The convenience of such a bag cannot be overstated, since all your essentials can be picked up in that bag and taken with you in seconds. Remember to rotate out expired medicines and other perishables every six or so months.

Maintain a communication method

Taking your smartphone with you goes with-

out saying; it's going to be your primary life-line to the rest of the world. In a widespread disaster, however, cell towers become easily overloaded, so you need to have a backup plan, which should include **ham radio**. Be sure to take a handheld ham radio with you as you evacuate your property. And if you've already stashed one in your grab-and-go bag, that's one less thing to think about collecting.

Other important items to take along

Here are some things to think about:

- Keys to your house and vehicle
- Warm clothing and jacket
- Laptop with important documents and passwords (and charger)
- Cash, credit cards, other forms of payment
- If you have the time and luxury, toys and games for the little ones, mementos (such as photographs, jewelry, and sentimental items), snacks to tie you over for a while

More than two minutes

In a widespread disaster, such as the California wildfire just mentioned, you and your family will most likely have known about the quickly moving flames, how close they were to your place, and the ensuing general evacuation order, long before the two-minute warning is sounded. If you haven't already collected the things you need for your evacuation, those warnings alone should give you a chance to re-adjust your priorities and start gathering your needed items. On the other hand, an earthquake might not give you much warning at all. And if this training topic will do any good, it might help you get a start on that list of items today, plenty of time before any such disaster has occurred.